

A 50-Year Love Affair

by Rolph Townshend (Towney)

Sailing has been my sport since I was 10 years old. I remember that Christmas as if it were yesterday. I had been bitten by the sailing bug and told my parents I wanted a Hampton One-design (18-footer) for Christmas. That was the type of small sailboat popular in Chestertown at that time, and I had to have one of my own. My parents thought I was too young for a classy boat like that which was selling then for about \$400. Way too much for a 10-year-old. But they liked my interest in sailing; so they got me an old 18-foot wooden Chesapeake Bay Skipjack for \$100. Well, I was happy to have my own boat, but very disappointed that it wasn't a Hampton. I named the boat Queenie, my father's name for my mother, and sailed her every day all that summer. The next year, I sold Queenie for \$200 and bought another wooden boat. After buying, repairing, and selling various wooden boats for several years, I finally got my Hampton, which brought Jack Martin and me together many years later in Annapolis.

I mention one other thing that influenced me during my early years. In Chestertown, being so near the Bay and the U.S. Naval Academy (USNA), it was a normal event to go down to the town docks on the Chester River and find a fleet of USNA sailboats there with Midshipmen out for a weekend cruise. These were big wooden cruising boats about 30 feet long with live-aboard accommodations. I would spend hours there

talking to the Mids and touring the boats. I said then that *someday, I would have a boat like that.*

After college, I got a job that took me to Annapolis where Jack was racing Hamptons. That was the big fleet there, and being a Hampton sailor, I fit right in. Jack and I became best friends and spent most of our free time together. In 1960, now with small children, we decided we should move up to a larger boat that the family could enjoy. We bought Fishers Island

A30 Association that winter, and in June, '65, eight A30s left Annapolis for the New York World's Fair, a three-week cruise with a week at the fair. Our families loved it and quickly fell in love with the A30. The fleet grew by leaps and bounds and was soon the largest one-design fleet on the Bay. I finally had the boat I had promised myself those many years ago.

That was almost 50 years ago. I have owned two A30s over that time and loved each one. I have many pictures of my family growing up on the A30. The races, the cruises, the wonderful Albergers who have become our very best friends, the memories that mean so much. I consider myself extremely lucky. It just doesn't get any better than that!

After 40 years with Westinghouse, I retired in 1991. I was sailing a C&C 35 at the time. When one leaves a job that has consumed them for that long a time, it leaves a big hole in their life. What is there to fill that hole? I decided that the most fun I ever had was owning an Alberg 30; so I sold my boat and bought another A30 in 1995. That became who I was. I was an Alberger! I will always be an Alberger! It has affected my life in so many positive ways. I have met so many wonderful friends, done so many wonderful things with them, and had so many exciting and beautiful experiences on and off the boat with them. The Alberg 30 has been, and continues to be, even though I no longer own a boat, one of the highlights of my life.



■ Skybird, Towney's last Alberg 30, which he sold to Mike Nikolich a couple of years ago.

Knockabouts in Rhode Island and sailed them to Annapolis. These were wooden daysailers, 34 feet long, built by Nat Herreshoff in Bristol in 1937. Soon there were five of these boats racing in Annapolis. We kept them all in a row at the Annapolis YC, and they got lots of praise for their sleek, beautiful lines. But, with no engine, they were soon determined to not be the optimum boat for our families.

It was then, in 1964, that Jack saw an Alberg 30 at Arnie Gay's Yacht Yard in Annapolis, and our 50 year love affair began. Ten of us bought A30s. These boats began to arrive in Annapolis in late '64. We formed the

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